

# The Effect of Cultural and Psychological Discrimination against Working Women on hindering their Economic Independency in Jordan

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## Abstract

This study aims at investigating the effect of cultural and psychological discrimination against working women on hindering their economic independency in Jordan. To achieve the objectives of the study a questionnaire of 30 items was developed to be the primary tool to collect data from the study's sample, which consists of 150 female employees in the private sector in Jordan. Collected data was analyzed via "most probable median" statistical program. Results indicated cultural and psychological discrimination against working women in Jordan have a very negative effect on their progress towards economic independency. Recommendations are set forward.

**Keywords:** Discrimination, Equality, Economic Independence, Wage gap Working Woman.

## Introduction:

In few last decades, the world has witnessed an increased interest in woman rights and position in society. As a result, several global, regional and local conferences were held in different parts of the world such as Copenhagen (1970), Nairobi (1975), Mexico (1985) and Pegen (1995). (UNIFEM, 2007). To express woman solidarity and discuss woman affairs.

Furthermore, such conference aimed at determining obstacles that hindered women participation in political, economic and social sectors. In addition, initiate future work plans which obligate states, NGO and international society are obliged to carry out such plans. International and states efforts in this regard have led to more benefits to women in obtaining their rights but not to the required level, also it helped women to be aware of their rights and problems they face (Al Atiyat, 2003).

A report by the international labor organization (ILO) entitled "facts on Women at work" (2005) mentions: "Today; women represent over 40% of the global labor force. More than ever before are completing higher levels of education, better job opportunities have increased many women independence...".

The report adds "...yet progress on three key indications for gender equality is still inadequate: glass ceiling (women in the top management), the gender pay gap and the sticky floor (women in the lowest paid job...)".

In other UN reports "women hold only around a mere 1% to 3% of top executive jobs in the largest corporations."

In regard to Jordanian working women the ILO conducted a study about women in the textile and garment-making industries (2002). Three important findings in this study:

- 1) The increased global trade and economic reforms have benefited Jordanian woman. Female participation rate rose from 3% in 1961 to about 15% in 1999.
- 2) More women are now able to achieve a degree of economic independence, and unprecedented status of being bread- winner.
- 3) These women who grew up with the norms of gender segregation having a Job outside the home was a significant achievement. The report concluded by indicating that women surveyed are perceived as meek and unlikely to assert their rights." (ILO, 2005).

current study comes as "fact finding" about working women status in general and the Jordanians in particular.

## The problem of the study

Although Jordanian working woman has been given opportunity to achieve higher education and Job opportunity, however, in 2006 Jordanian woman was ranked 92 out of 150 countries in gender gap index (Shtaiwe 2008). This means that women in Jordan still face many obstacles to be equal with man or at least to have her economic independence, thus, the problem of this study lies in the following statement:

The effect of cultural and psychological discrimination against working women on hindering their economic independency in Jordan

## Objectives of the study:

- 1- The effect of cultural and psychological discrimination against working women on hindering their

economic independency in Jordan.

- 2- Examine the status of working women in general and Jordanian woman in particular in terms of economic independence.

In order to achieve these objectives it would be very appropriate to answer the following questions:

- 1- What is cultural and psychological discrimination against working woman?
- 2- What are the effects of such discrimination on working woman's economic independence?
- 3- What are the effects of social upbringing of woman on her progress towards more Job opportunities and eventually to economic independence?
- 4- What is the state role in women's empowerment?
- 5- What is women organizations (Feminist movements) role in the empowerment of working woman?
- 6- Is a working women faces economic marginalization in Jordan?

### Importance of the study

- 1) This study is important because it discusses one segment of women namely working women in the world and Jordan in particular. It focuses on this particular segment at the same time the study focuses on certain problems face working woman namely the cultural and psychological discrimination against working woman and its effect on her economic independence. Moreover, this study does not address general topics relate to women in general nor women organizations and movements rather, the study focuses on one segment of women with certain type of discrimination against her, and its effect on certain aspect namely, economic independence.
- 2) As this author being a working woman, has the confidence to say, this study is one of the most serious studies that addresses and focuses on the most dangerous type of discrimination- the culture of a patriarchal society – and its impact on women economic independence. While other studies have been conducted by the United Nations and its organizations, foreign funded local women organization in Jordan who call themselves "women activists" instead of feminist movement never visited a garment making factory ever (Atiyat2008).

This study focused on women who work in formal economy only.

### Methodology

**Sample:** the sample of the study consists of (150) working women who are formal paid employees in banks, insurance companies and other private sector institutions

**Data collection:** Author developed a 30-item questionnaire to be answered by the study's participants. Reliability of this tool is obtained when it was submitted to a panel of experts who did some changes, which were taken into consideration.

**Procedures:** Author contacted several business establishments in Amman, soliciting volunteers to participate on the study. Their e-mails were obtained a question was sent to each one of them.

Responses were received in two days. All responses were good for analysis. N=150

### Data Analysis:

Author used Fischer equation in order to find out the most likely response through the number of responses frequency, as follow:

$$\frac{T1 \times 5 + T2 \times 4 + T3 \times 3 + T4 \times 2 + T5 \times 1}{TK}$$

most likely median=

$$TK$$

Whereas:

T1= the most frequent participant response (absolutely not important)

T2= the most frequent participant response (not important)

T3= the most frequent participant response (important to some degree)

T4= the most frequent participant response (important)

T5= The most frequent participant response (very important)

TK=sample=150

### Literature Review

This author is determined to make use of relevant literature in order to have a comprehensive and meaningful study that reveals facts about discrimination working women face in the entire world in general and Jordanian in particular. Among the published literature in this context author has used a guide booklet issued by "the Regional Economic Empowerment for women project (REEWP) (May 2013)". This booklet gives guidance to authors to sharpen their research in terms of conducting a scientific research, types of research (qualitative quantitative) and how to design and develop a professional questionnaire in order to achieve the objectives of the study while maintaining scientific research ethics such as: Truthfulness, expertise, safety, trust, consent, anonymity,

exploitation and more. This booklet starts with a quotation by one of leading women in Jordan, Khader (2009) who said, "there are thousands of women movements and organizations, spread from Australia to Canada and from Peru to Japan that demand gender equality and women rights, unfortunately; women still far away from obtaining their rights; until today women in Saudi Arabia (the richest country in the Middle East) are forbidden to drive a car."

To deprive women- including working women –from their basic right, not to drive a car- is a form of violence which I can refer to as "harmful cultural or traditional practices" such as child marriage, forced marriage dowry related violence and so called "honor" crimes as the case in Jordan (article 35 of the Jordanian constitution). The problem does not stop here, but exceeds it substantially; namely, no initiatives are launched to curb or eradicate such "harmful practices" and no legislations which may eliminate discrimination against women was ever enacted, despite the UN calls and resolutions to outlaw such practices against women including working women (General Assembly resolution 61/143 and 63/155).

Moreover, discrimination especially at work place, and the importance of enacting legislation to address such discrimination, is the subject of a comprehensive legal and policy framework at the international level (committee on Economic, and cultural rights, general committee no. 14, 2000). Over the past sixty years, numerous provisions in international legal and policy frameworks have called for legal "measures to address" harmful practices (Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), general recommendation).

UN women (UN's entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of women, published" Handbook for legislation on violence against women (2012), which addresses many issues and problem face women in general with many recommendations such as: legislation [of any state], should acknowledge that all forms of violence against women- including mental cruelty which working women suffer from- any form of discrimination, a manifestation of historically unequal relations between men and women, and a violation of women's human rights (cross- reference section 3.1.1 of the Handbook).

Working women are subjected to sex harassment or one form of sex behavior at work place. UN statistics shows that 40%-50% of working women had been subjected of sex harassment worldwide. (International knowledge network of women in politics, I know politics).

Women in Jordan remain severely marginalized in the country's political and economic systems and broadly discriminated against by both law and customs (Human Development Report 2002 (AHDR).Further more, "AHDR" report, mentions recent advances towards greater gender equality in Egypt and in Jordan in particular, Jordan for raising the legal age of marriage, giving women legal recourse for divorce and other measures to empower women (P118), which in turn provide a good launching pad for women to become leaders. However, Dr. Al Atiyat (2008) in her book "The woman's movement in Jordan: activism, discourses and strategies" says, women's movement which begot women leaders, is not as existing literature suggests, primarily a passive recipient of benefits and services resulting from political change.

There are two points of view in describing woman's status in Jordan, one of "AHDR" report in which the marginalization of women in Jordan is evident, while in the other extreme is Al-Atiyat who situates women's movement in general and the leading one in particular, as being the "dynamic facts" in the expansion of civil society. ADHR report concludes that the political emancipation of Arab women still has a long way to go (ADHR 2003 p 31 f). Both preparations are relatively inaccurate, however, Dr. Atiyat failed to emphasize deficits in knowledge, freedom and women's empowerment which still remain serious.

Consequently, she has challenged to break the rules by attaching Islamic entities which constitute a solid separation wall between woman and her advancement in Jordan"..... traditional identities-namely tribal and Islamic- remain active and present a constant challenge to the modernization process taking place in the country." Leading women in Jordan are trying to establish what is called "detraditionalization" project includes demoting and sensitizing the patriarchal aspects of both institutions to gender issues. This is very difficult project, however, it has resulted, so far, and for the first time in women's movement, a feminist agenda is being carried out. This new agenda have brought to the forefront several new themes. These themes used to be taboos in the Jordanian public sphere such as: crimes of honor, violence against women and women in politics

In a study conducted by Piterman (2009) in Australia for CEDA organization points out: When asked "is it almost impossible for women to progress to executive level in such a male –dominated cluster of the financial service industry ",16 per cent of women agreed and 85 per cent of men disagreed .

Sloan (2005) in an article in The Australian Journal for labour Economics mentions "I was the only female on the executive team and I've had comments like it's those bio- rhythms again ."I can reflect on a past senior colleague who used to come across as excessively aggressive or tense but upon reflection I can see it was simply her trying to find her voice ."It can be intimidating for speak up around men ,especially 'big men' with 'big voices'. The presence alone can create anxiety that alienates the minority ,being the female ,who in many women to cases are smaller in stature and quieter in vocal delivery .We need to lift women's confidence and we need to help them speak up and find their voice."

"I can sometimes be fearful of women who are manipulative and yet, men who behave the same are not deemed manipulative, they are deemed as influencers. Why is this so? (Slade 2010)

"There is no support from our own sisterhood; basically women are criticizing women".

Nakabayash, M. a member of the ruling Democratic party of Japan (DPJ) and strong advocate for increasing opportunities for women in Japan has many contributions in this field, she says:

"It can be intimidating for women to speak up around men, especially 'big men' with 'big voices'. The presence alone can create anxiety that alienates the minority, being the female, who in many cases are smaller in stature and quieter in vocal delivery.

We need to lift women's confidence and we need to help them speak up and find their voice."

AHDR concludes that the political emancipation of Arab women still has a long way to go. (AHDR 2003, P.31 F.)

In a study by IPSOS (2007) 41,3% of sample respondents indicated that males have a stronger personality and presence while 11,5% pointed out that females are more capable in serving people needs. These results show that society is not ready to see too much women in parliament.

Leading women in Jordan have failed to the commitment to diminishing gender subordination (Wiering, 1995). In addition leading women failed to ignite women's social movements in order to elaborate their own program of action, debate their own goals and tactics and remain free from outside influence (Wiering, 1995).

Al Zubaidi et al (2011) conducted a study entitled, An Overview on Women's Leadership Issues in Jordan, in which they state the following:

"women perform (60%) of the work in the world, they do not have access to no more than (10%) of world income, and only own (1%) the world's wealth. Globally, between (40%-50%) of female employees have been subjected to some form of sexual harassment or unwanted sexual behavior at the workplace. Although women make up (52%) of the world's population, they accounted for only (21%) of the subjects covered by the international press. (86%) of the people who represent the public opinion in the media are men.

Many authors point out: (Betty, 1997, Richard, 2000; Lauri, 1999, Oldham, 1996) that Arab women are one of the most abused world wide due to tribal traditions that based on religious belief.

Reviewed literature such as: Alfaneq 2003, Amawi 2000, Bustani 2001, Hourani 1997; Hussein 2002, Ibrahim 1993. Showed that: Jordanian women on the whole still less economically and politically empowered than women in other parts of the world, despite some recent improvements. The top three positive enablers to women in Jordan striving to reach leadership positions:

Jordan Human development Report, (2010) summarizes reasons for the lack of leading women and working women in general, in the economic sector in Jordan, as follows:

- Women are reluctant to create their own production businesses whereas female ownership of small and medium sized enterprises (SME) stands at mere 5,3% of the totality of such businesses
- Women rarely own capital: women account for only 17% of land owners and 22,1% of apartment owners and 22% of the total value of securities (National commission for women, 2011)
- Financial obstacle, women rarely own capital.
- Women lack of skills needed to develop and run productive businesses. Thus, women in Jordan face technical and management obstacles mainly caused by social considerations. Low self-confidence is inculcated in Jordanian women by their traditional and religious upbringing as well as cultural heritage and submissive, working in socially acceptable fields (teacher or nurse). They are viewed as the weakest link always in need of a protection. These factors converge to create a negative perception among women of self, capacities and potential, weakening their self-esteem, entrepreneurial initiative and resourcefulness. (JOHUD, 2012)

Working women of the world in general, and Jordan in particular; while one of the main concerns of this study is to investigate some local studies with challenging and daring results such as the study of Dr. Hurub 2012 who points out that, "... one of the major obstacles facing women in Jordan is economic and gender marginalization that caused by religious beliefs."

Jutting and Morrison (OECD, 2005) in their policy brief no.27, have shown the institutional framework as key to understanding the economic role of women in developing countries... patriarchal structures perpetuate gender inequality... women must challenge existing power relations and change or abolish patriarchal institutions.

Social institutions and cultural practices such as:

Laws, norms, traditions and codes of conduct often are the main sources of persisting discrimination against women in developing countries. Examples include polygamy unequal inheritance rights, obstacles to free movement and early family imposed marriages of teenagers. (World bank 2001).

Finally the aforementioned is just the tip of an iceberg. This study will add little bit visibility to that tip.

## Results

### Sample characteristics

**Table 1**  
Age

20-30 yrs	72	68%
31-40 yrs	49	32,6%
41-50 yrs	21	14%
50 and over	8	5,3%

Table 1 above shows the majority of participant are in the age bracket 20-30 years (72 or 68%) followed by 31-40 age bracket or 49 employee 32.6% and 41-50 years old 21 participants or 14% and 50 years old 8 or 5,3% this means the majority are between the age 20-40 years.

**Table 2**  
Experience

Less than 5 yrs	63	42%
6-10	59	39,3%
11-15	20	13,3%
15 yrs and over	8	3,2%

Table 2 shows that the majority of participants have less than 5 yrs experience 63 or 42% followed by 6-10 yrs experience 59 or 39,3% 11-15 yrs experience are 20 employee or 13,3% and 8 participants have 15 yrs and more or 3,2%.

**Table 3**  
Education

BA	99	66%
Masters	38	25,3%
PhD	13	9,3%

Table 3 above shows the majority of participants hold first college degree 99 or 66% while 38. Participants or 25,5% hold masters degree and 13 or 23% hold PhD. This means that the study's sample are relatively young, well educated and have fair work experience.



**Table 4**

No.	Item	Very high	high	medium	low	Very low	Most likely median
1	The Shortcoming of current social and economic arrangement with respect to the status of women represent a major issue in Jordan	101	35	—	14	—	4.75
2	Jordanian woman remain severely marginalized in Jordanian political and economic systems.	85	39	11	14	1	4.43
3	Woman in Jordan faces empowerment deficit, Freedom deficit and human capabilities/ knowledge deficit.	99	38	13	—	—	4.30
4	Woman in Jordan is broadly discriminated against in both law and culture	90	10	30	15	5	4.15
5	Woman in Jordan is taking advantage of all opportunities to build her capabilities	79	33	17	21	—	4.09
6	I feel tribal and culture in Jordan cause me severe psychological impact	102	28	3	14	3	3.85
7	Society prefer male managers to fill vacant managerial positions	57	41	29	17	6	3.70
8	I employee all available means to achieve the organization's objectives	67	48	30	2	3	3.17
9	My firm pays me lesser than male co-workers gender pay gap	89	30	21	10	10	3.14
10	Jordanian women is fighting uphill battle for de-traditionalizing and democratizing both state and societal institutions	55	40	11	37	17	3.05
11	I use my problem solving skills in my work unit	34	27	49	13	27	3
12	I am able to bring clear work ideas and initiatives to my work	49	21	48	23	9	2.95
13	I open all communication means with colleagues	53	61	29	3	4	2.80
14	Woman participation in Labor market is very low in comparison with men.	51	33	29	17	20	2.70
15	I trust my male colleagues in work matters	49	27	51	18	5	2.65
16	I am aware of (sticky floor) women in the lowest paid jobs	51	29	33	27	10	2.55
17	I am aware of glass ceiling which working women suffer from	51	42	18	7	32	2.80
18	I keep silent when I can't deal verbally with my boss	26	17	31	59	17	2.55
19	Working women in Jordan is in need for women organization that seek the advancement of women in general	17	61	28	13	31	2.40
20	I pay the manager's attention when mistakes occur in a polite way	41	50	40	8	11	2.36
21	Working woman is in great need for women's activists who are elected and have a long history of struggle against patriarchy	45	42	29	19	21	2.35
22	Leading women in Jordan have the courage in questioning the inequality of the sexes	49	38	60	3	—	2.30
23	There is complete empowerment for working woman in Jordan	3	21	33	40	30	2.15
24	I don't receive enough tutoring from leading women in the field	12	8	57	33	40	2.12
25	I admit my mistakes, with determination for not repeating them	71	34	25	18	2	2.11
26	In recent years there is more equality than past decades	69	33	14	4	30	2.11
27	I rely more on written orders and instructions than verbal ones	32	41	60	7	10	2.10
28	Jordanian legislations is biased against females in general, such as honor crimes	19	34	67	13	17	2.01
29	I keep silent when I disagree with colleagues opinion	9	3	8	110	20	2.00
30	My arch enemy is male co-workers	13	19	29	3	120	1.91

### Analysis

Item no. (1) scored the highest on "most likely median"(4.75). This indicates that working woman faces social constraints, which hinder her progress.

Item (2) supports the fact in item (1) that working woman is marginalized in the political and economic systems with the score of (4,43).

Item 3 scored (4,30) which proves that working woman in particular faces empowerment deficit, freedom deficit and human capabilities/ knowledge deficit.

These first three items achieve the study's objectives in showing that a woman faces severe discriminations in and out of work place and labour market. Whereas woman in Jordan is broadly discriminated against in both law and culture, (item 4 with score of 4.15).

In turn, woman is not passive against the ugly cultural and psychological discrimination, rather, women in Jordan is taking advantage of all opportunities available to build her capabilities, as in item 5 with score of 4.09

Item (6) shows more discrimination and psychological negative impact as a result of tribal and culture are dominant discrimination factors. This is supported by item (7) score of 3,70 that society prefers male managers to fill vacant managerial positions.

Working woman fights back when she employs all means to achieve organization's goals (item 8 score 3,17)

This supported by item 10 with score of 3,05 item 11-score 3, item 12-score 2,95; item 13-score 2,80 and the rest of items. However, working woman is aware of discriminatory practices against her such as item

16,17,18 working woman is in need for a support from woman organization and woman activists as in items 19 and 21,24.

Item 30 scored the least important thing for working woman that is "my arch enemy is male co-workers" score 1,91.

Working women in Jordan are cooperative with men to build together better society, modern country open to civilized world.

### Recommendations

- 1- While there are no magic formulas for overcoming gender inequality, however, man in Jordan must change the old mentality he carries towards woman, namely "sex object". This requires taking bold steps, coordinated actions to address multiple constraints. It requires investment in people's skills capabilities and supporting their abilities to contribute to higher productive activity economy wide. Media and modern technology should be involved in creating private sector leadership and innovations for gender equality, and to cut ties with old practices and middle age traditions, which are hostile to women.
- 2- Conduct more research and studies involving women movements, women activists and organizations, throughout the kingdom.

### Conclusion

Gender disparities persist in the world or work. Gender equality in the world of work is a win-win on many fronts. Unfortunately, the majority of men especially in the Middle East region do not accept this logic.

In Jordan, for example women are more economically excluded than men. Women participation in labor market is as low as 25 percent in this region of the world (World Bank, 2009). Gender gaps are evident among farmers, entrepreneurs and employees alike, and women earn less than men.

Finally, here in Jordan, one sees women work in every sector including military and police; move freely and earn money; unfortunately, they still chained with rusty social chains that keep women on sticky grounds. World Bank and other international experts have declared that social norms are a key factor underlying deprivations and constraints throughout lifecycle.

Tribal and old traditions and religious beliefs are not allowing women in Jordan to advance. Polygamy and early forced marriages are rampant in Jordan. Man considers woman as sex object to satisfy his pleasure nothing else.

If man does not change of the past, him and his country will remain a third or fourth world country.

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## Index 1

20.1.2015

Dear participant  
Greetings


Kindly express your opinion or close to it by marking check  on the appropriate box.  
This survey is for scientific purpose only.

Your assistance is deeply appreciated

Author Dr. Amal Al Tal

TalJordan777@hotmail.com- Response address

Sample Variables

Variable		
Age	20-30 years	
	31-40 years	
	41-50 years	
	50 and over	
Experience	Less than 5 years	
	6-10	
	11-15	
	16 and over	
Education Qualification	BA	
	MA	
	PhD	



No.	Item	Very high	high	medium	low	Very low
1	The Shortcoming of current social and economic arrangement with respect to the status of women represent a major issue in Jordan					
2	Jordanian woman remain severely marginalized in Jordanian political and economic systems.					
3	Woman in Jordan is broadly discriminated against in both law and culture					
4	There is complete empowerment for working woman in Jordan					
5	Woman in Jordan is taking advantage of all opportunities to build her capabilities					
6	Woman in Jordan faces empowerment deficit, Freedom deficit and human capabilities/ knowledge deficit.					
7	I am aware of glass ceiling which working someone suffer from					
8	Leading women in Jordan have the courage in questioning the inequality of the sexes					
9	Jordanian women is fighting uphill battle for de-traditionalizing and democratizing both state and societal institutions					
10	I am aware of sticky floor women in the lowest paid jobs					
11	Working women in Jordan is in need for women organization that seek the advancement of women in general					
12	Working woman is in great need for women's activists who are elected and have a long history of struggle against patriarchy					
13	Woman participation in Labor market is very low in comparison with men.					
14	My arch enemy is my male co-workers					
15	My firm pays me lesser than my male co-workers gender pay gap					
16	I feel tribal and culture in Jordan cause me severe psychological impact					
17	I don't receive enough tutoring from leading women in the field					
18	Society prefer male managers to fill vacant managerial positions					
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21	I keep silent when I can't deal verbally with my boss					
22	I keep silent when I disagree with colleagues opinion					
23	I employee all available means to achieve the organization's objectives					
24	I rely more on written orders and instructions than verbal ones					
25	I pay the manager's attention when mistakes occur in a polite way					
26	I admit my mistakes, with determination for not repeating them					
27	I use my problem solving skills in my work unit					
28	I am able to bring clear work ideas and initiatives to my work					
29	I open all communication means with colleagues					
30	In recent years there is more equality than past decades					

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